

**SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN (D-Md)**  
**ENVIRONMENT & PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE**  
**HEARING ON**  
**"OVERSIGHT ON EPA TOXIC CHEMICAL POLICIES"**  
**OPENING STATEMENT**  
Tuesday, April 28, 2008

Madame Chairman, thank you.

The mission of the Environmental Protection Agency is to protect human health and the environment. The Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS) Program is a manifestation of that part of the EPA's mission which includes the evaluation and regulation of toxic chemicals.

With over 500 chemicals listed, and over 9,000,000 queries to the IRIS database, IRIS is a valuable resource both within the U.S. and around the world in understanding the potential human effects that exposure to the listed chemicals might cause. The quantitative information contained in IRIS allows IRIS to be a component in the regulatory process of many states and even other countries. The regard with which this database is held is a tribute to the tireless efforts of EPA scientists in evaluating the risks of the listed chemicals. In order to be both useful and credible, the process to list a chemical in the IRIS database must be unbiased, science-based, timely, and transparent.

In the last few years, despite increases in IRIS personnel, a backlog of IRIS assessments have developed. This backlog is due, in part, to new OMB-managed, interagency reviews and due to delays in completion of assessments to await new research.

Earlier this month, the EPA released a revised assessment process for IRIS. This revised process concerns me as it will allow far less transparency into the decision making process.

The new assessment process conflates the EPA's science position on an assessment with the EPA's science *policy* position. Assessment findings should inform policy, not be informed by policy.

Finally, this revised assessment process continues the recent practice of OMB's having a role in the process as well as establishing a new, interagency review process for IRIS. This change potentially compromises the integrity of IRIS by allowing those agencies that may have a stake in the EPA's assessment be able to influence that very assessment.

I am pleased to welcome Dr. Lynn R. Goldman, a professor of environmental health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Health. Dr. Goldman has served as EPA Assistant Administrator for Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances. Dr. Goldman's work in reducing the risk of chemicals and pesticides to the health of the public in general, and children in particular, is noteworthy.

I look forward to hearing Dr. Goldman's testimony and that of all of the other panelists today as we conduct this oversight hearing into EPA's toxic chemical policies.

Public health and environmental policy decisions must be rooted in objective scientific assessments. These assessments must be timely and made using the best practices possible.

Thank you Madame Chairman.

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